

LABOR POWER

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SOCIALIST UNION PARTY

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THE STATE OF THE UNION

THE PRICE OF DISUNITY

ON THE DALLAS UNION FRONT

DE LEON AND REFORMISM

WHAT ARE LABOR LAWS WORTH

WORKERS' CORRESPONDENCE

**Published by the Socialist Union Party,
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ORGANIZATION NOTES

NEW HEADQUARTERS FOR NATIONAL OFFICE

The National Office of the Socialist Union Party has been removed to 140 Fourth Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. All mail intended for the National Office or for LABOR POWER should hereafter be addressed to the new address.

The new headquarters will combine under one roof both the National Offices and the printing department which has heretofore been operated separately.

PRINTING PLANT ENLARGED

Our printing department has been enlarged by the addition of an automatic Miller printing press which increases the capacity of the plant considerably. Plans are now afoot to further increase the usefulness of the plant by the addition of a linotype. To translate these plans into a reality a Printing Equipment Fund is being launched by the National Office. We have received a pledge of \$100 to inaugurate this fund. This pledge however has a string attached to it. It is contingent upon its being "matched" by a similar pledge. This offer provides a splendid opportunity for our comrades and friends to help raise a substantial sum with which to launch our drive for a linotype machine. Los Angeles has started the ball arolling by pledging itself to raise the sum of \$70.00 for the Printing equipment Fund. This leaves the small sum of \$30 to go to clinch the original pledge of \$100. The raising of the balance, \$300, should offer no difficulty for our comrades and friends. Send all pledges and contributions to the Socialist Union Party, 140 Fourth Ave., Bklyn., N.Y., earmarked for the Printing Equipment Fund.

NEW LEAFLET ISSUED

The National Office has just issued a new leaflet—"Dividing Labor's Forces—C.I.O. 'Organizes' Construction Bosses," dealing with the strike-breaking invasion of the C.I.O. into the building construction industry. This is a very timely leaflet and should

enjoy a widespread distribution, especially among union members of both C.I.O. and A.F.L. The price of the leaflet is \$1.00 per thousand or ten cents per hundred plus postage.

WORKERS' POCKET SERIES--No. 1

"Daniel De Leon—American Pioneer Socailist." 32 pp. Price 1c.

"Daniel De Leon—Pioneer American Socialist," first in the new series of Workers' Pocket Booklets on topics of interest to workers, has just come off the Socialist Union Party Press.

This new booklet, dealing as it does with De Leon, the man and epoch-making contributions to the science of Marxism, not only fulfills a long-felt need but appears at a most opportune time. Never before in the history of the American labor movement has there been a gerater need for the beacon light of De Leonism to light up the dark corners of confusion and ignorance. The degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the precipitate flight of the "intellectuals" from the camp of Marxism, have contributed to place Marxism on the defensive, and to create a spirit of defeatism within the ranks of the labor movement. For this condition there is but one antidote—De Leonism.

The teachings of and the tactical principles propounded by Daniel De Leon are here summarized in a concise, trenchant style, which serves as an excellent introduction to the works of De Leon.

It is the duty of all who would spread the light amidst the darkness of confusion to give this booklet the widest possible distribution among all workers. It is priced at the nominal sum of 1c and is within the means of everybody. Comrades and readers are urged to send in for a bundle order not only for the purpose of sale but also for distribution at labor gatherings, etc.

Send all orders (at the rate of 1c per copy; 5c postage per 100 copies) to the Literature Dept, Socialist Union Party 140 Fourth Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

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Editorials . . .

WHAT ARE LABOR LAWS WORTH?

For over fifty years the American labor movement has devoted a good portion of its energies and resources to struggling for the enactment of a wide program of social and labor legislation. This campaign has, to a great extent, met with considerable success—that is the desired laws have been enacted. Among such measures passed have been sanitary and safety regulations for factories, abolition of night work for women, prohibition of child labor (to a small extent only, it is true), minimum wage laws, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, public works programs, low-cost housing subsidies, the Wagner Act, protecting workers' rights to organize, and workmen's compensation, etc.

On the surface this appears to be a striking series of victories which have served to advance the cause of labor. Only recently Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, in a public address, called attention to the remarkable growth of labor legislation since her entry into the field of social service in the early years of the present century. She decalimed at length about the "wonderful progress" that labor has made during this period, and singled out workmen's compensation as a par-

ticularly significant and worthwhile victory.

What is the truth about Workmen's Compensation? As is well known, this type of legislation was only enacted into law over the bitter opposition of the employers. In many states it was necessary to go to the length of amending the state constitution in order to pass the new laws. Workmen's compensation was highly touted as the means of assuring justice to the unfortunate victims of industrial disabilities and of rescuing them from dependence on charity.

It is now more than a quarter of a century since the introduction of this type of law. How has it operated? As it stands today, the system of industrial compensation has resolved itself into an insurance racket, with a few crumbs thrown to the supposed beneficiaries, the wounded and maimed veterans of industry who are left holding the bag.

This judgment is not ours alone. The National Conference for Labor Legislation, held annually under the auspices of the U. S. Department of Labor, whose proceedings are issued as official publications under the imprint of the department, has time and again heard similar conclusions expressed by trade union officials who have devoted years to the study of Workmen's Compensation and its suitable administration.

At the 1935 Conference, for instance, President Donally of the Ohio State Federation of Labor voiced his disappointment with the results. Said he, "For some 25 years I have been a sort of crusading knight for Workers' compensation . . . I am not satisfied with the compensation law in Ohio or in any other state. It is my opinion that we are not taking care of the situation. Sooner or later we are going to have to take care of people who lose arms and legs and who are not able to work any more. We are not going to dismiss them with just a little payment for an arm or leg, we are not going to give a widow with children a certain amount

of money and after a few short years have the widow and children on public or private charity . . ."

And his colleague, President Watts of the Massachusetts AFL, chimed in with the statement that "In most of our states out of every dollar which the employers are paying for the protection of those men injured in industry and their dependents, the worker who is injured, and, in a fatal case, his dependents, are quite fortunate after the insurance racket and the doctors and the lawyers get through with him, if he gets 30 per cent out of that dollar . . ." It is small wonder that Mr. Watts was compelled to ask the question, "For whose benefit does compensation exist—for the insurance companies or the injured worker?"

In their criticism of existing compensation systems, Donally and Watts were not alone. A number of other delegates to the Conference expressed similar sentiments. One of the principal criticisms of Workmen's compensation is that not only has it belied in practice its early promises, but it has proved to be a potent contributory factor in the development of one of the most pressing problems confronting labor today, i.e., the growing widespread discrimination in industry and business against workers over 40 years of age.

It has become an unwritten law of industry that 40 years is the deadline for employment. This rigidly enforced dictum is rapidly eliminating the middle aged workers, except where he is protected by union organization, from the ranks of industry. The extension of Workmen's compensation has given this movement considerable impetus, from two sides. Firstly, the insurance premiums being based upon loss experience in the given industry, and modified by the particular loss experience of each employer, an incentive is given the employer to get rid of those whose slower reactions because of age may result in injuries which alter the employer's loss record for the

worse. Secondly, since the writing of compensation insurance does not yield as large a return to the insurance company as do other types of coverage, the insurance company will often refuse to accept certain risks unless the employer reduces the chances of losses by getting rid of older workers. Once again Mr. Watts serves as independent authority for this statement.

Speaking at the same Conference for Labor Legislation, Mr. Watt told the assembled delegates that "Those three systems (private pensions, group insurance and Workmen's compensation) are behind practically all discrimination against elderly workers in industry. I can cite an instance in our state of an insurance company which went to a foundry making coal and gas stoves and simply said to the foundry employer, 'We wouldn't renew your policy on the first day of October unless you lower the average age of your employees.' As a result, the employer simply became a victim of circumstances and had to discharge the elder men in his employ. Those are the recorded facts."

For these thousands of workers who have been displaced by the operation of Workmen's compensation, this "significant labor victory" has proved to be economic death sentence. Of what value to them are even the most liberal provisions of compensation for industrial injuries and disabilities when the full operation of the law means throwing them on the scrap heap?

Incidentally, lest our readers gain an incorrect conception of the position of Mr. Watt, whose criticisms we have cited, we may state that Mr. Watt does not reject Workmen's compensation in principle, but merely opposes private insurance carriers which, in most states, enjoy a monopoly of the business. Mr. Watt would replace these private carriers with a non-competitive State Fund. His contention is that once the profit motive is eliminated from Workmen's compensation, all will be well.

(Continued on page 16)

THE STATE OF THE UNION

[At various times some politician, the President or a Governor or a Senator or an aspirant to one of those offices, delivers an oration to his breathless constituents or followers in which he declaims on the "State of the Union," with great emphasis on the bounties of American capitalism which will be ever so much more beneficent under his own direction. These reports invariably express the class viewpoint of capitalism, the system which the politician seeks to uphold and maintain intact. In the following article the writer has sought to give a comprehensive view of the American scene from the viewpoint of the workers, those who receive little or none of its benefits though it is their own toil which has made them all available to society.—*Editor, LABOR POWER.*]

Nature has endowed the territory which constitutes the United States with prolific resources. On every hand the natural prerequisites for the abundant life are to be found. The seas surrounding the nation abound in fish and shellfood. The harbors are ideal for the carrying on of traffic with the rest of the world. The American forests are heavily stocked with trees bearing many varieties of useful wood—ash, birch, oak, pine, spruce, etc.; and game of every description are to be found in the depths of those forests.

Because of the favorable geographic location and the fertility of the soil, the agricultural products of the nation are varied and plentiful—citrus fruits, wheat, corn, rice, cotton, vegetables, tobacco, grains of all kinds, beets for sugar refining, etc.—a natural flood of food and raw materials unequalled throughout the world. The subsoil wealth of the country is likewise rich and varied enough to fill the needs of a country ten times the population of the United States. Copper, the chief material of the gigantic electrical industry as well as of numerous others, is found in Colorado, Arizona and

New Mexico. Coal is available in a dozen states. Iron ore is not only plentiful but is strategically located in various sections. The great oil reserves—life blood of modern transportation—place the United States at the top of the world's producers. Zinc, gold, silver, asbestos, tin, nickel and numerous other minerals are plentiful.

The abundance of natural wealth of the United States as compared with the rest of the world can be seen at a glance from the following partial table:

	U. S.	Rest of World
	Per cent	
Population.....	6	94
Arable Land.....	10	90
Wheat.....	18	82
Oats.....	30	70
Coal.....	35	65
Lumber.....	50	50
Cotton.....	58	42
Oil.....	69	31
Corn.....	60	40

Natural resources do not of themselves necessarily mean well-being for the population. It is still necessary to till the soil, to dig the mines, to drill the wells, to fell the trees and to transport the raw materials to factories and refineries in order to transform them into consumable goods. For this there must exist a high degree of industrial development plus a skilled working class. America certainly has both in plenty. The American workers are the most skilled proletariat on the face of the earth, capable of the highest degree of technique in production. Both industrially and culturally they are the flower of the world's exploited.

AMERICA'S PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

In 1928-1929, the years of peak production, there was a national capacity of 5 trillion pounds of goods, according to competent industrial engineers.

Actually only 3½ trillion pounds were produced; and due to the scarcity of purchasing power among the population, the nation was capable of absorbing only 3 trillion pounds. Thus, in the years of the greatest production in the United States, industry was only used to the extent of 70% of capacity in terms of production or 60% of capacity in terms of consumption. A short glance down the list of key industries gives an inkling of the status of production during the heyday of American capitalism:

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Production Capacity</i>
Agriculture	70%
Oil	68%
Coal	65%
Machine Tools	62%
Steel	60%
Shoes	56%
Automobiles	50%
Flour	40%

The development of the industrial plant in America to convert the untold wealth of existing natural resources has been the history of an unprecedented rise in the use of energy in wealth production. Energy development in the United States has multiplied more than 80 times in less than a century. In 1850 there was a total of energy development of one-third horsepower per human laborer in production. By 1900 this had risen to 3 hp. By 1930, the tremendous amount of 27 hp. per worker had been reached. On the farms, the use of mechanical power had increased more than 38 times in the three decades between 1900 and 1930.

The foregoing figures give one a glimpse into the potentialities for the development of an adequate, not to say luxurious, standard of living for the masses of present day society. Yet in the midst of all this possible wealth, the vast majority of the American population lacks every essential for "the more abundant life."

The major item in the list of life's

necessities is, of course, food. American capitalism, in this case, has convicted itself of hopeless bankruptcy in the plain and brutal fact that 90 million people in this country do not have enough to eat. Sixty-two per cent of the population manage to exist on a bare subsistence diet; and, of these, 12 per cent are forced to live on an emergency diet which is paving the way for their early demise from a myriad of causes other than plain starvation.

In the matter of clothing, the workers of America fared no better. As government statistics show, two-thirds of the people have always been insufficiently clothed. In the same country where cotton is plowed under and wool is stored away for a possible rise in market prices if war comes, the people go garbed virtually in rags.

We have heard a great deal about the terrible housing situation in this land during the past few years, but it is difficult to envision the scope of this problem, which is unsolvable forever, as far as the capitalist system is concerned. Where an untold wealth of building materials exist we find 25 per cent of the American people living and dying in miserable shacks or slums. In fact more than two-thirds of the populace do not live in homes which might be termed ordinarily decent, according to various investigators. That the health of the workers must suffer severely from these conditions is indicated from the fact that one-third of all city dwellers lack water in their homes and have no sanitary facilities whatsoever. The farms are in a worse state—80 per cent have no water or sanitation and 88 per cent have no electric light or telephone to use in case of an emergency on their isolated plots.

The lack of adequate food, clothing and shelter gives rise to a serious medical problem that shows no promise of solution either. More than 50 per cent of the inhabitants of the country have no medical care at all. Nor is it any

consolation to the starving members of the dental profession to hear that 80 per cent of the American people still need adequate dental care—but cannot afford to pay for it. As for such a luxury as regular medical examinations before illness, more than 90 per cent had none.

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL INCOME

Despite the fact that Federal Department of Labor statistics estimate that an income of \$1,500 annually is necessary to provide a decent standard of living for a normal family (estimated at a fraction over 4 persons) more than two-thirds of the American family units failed to earn that sum. When it is recalled that in 1929 only (only!) 42.4 per cent of the nation's families earned less than \$1,500, it is easy to judge the rapidity with which the nation's workers are being reduced to poverty. Only 4 per cent of the population received incomes of more than \$5,000. Most interesting of all, the figures reveal that the top 1 per cent, economically speaking, received 20 per cent of the total income.

Concomitant with the pauperization of the masses of workers is the growth in the ranks of the unemployed, a direct result of the operation of capitalism's inexorable laws. This permanent army grew from 4 millions in 1929 to 17 millions in 1933, then dropped to 10 million in 1937. It now seems to be between 12 and 14 millions, despite all the extra production occasioned by the war. Nor is there any prospect that this army of permanently displaced veterans of industry will ever be reduced. Technological improvements and the installation of rationalization or speed up methods in industry go on apace, despite the efforts of the organized workers to curb their growth. The results of this process of mechanization and speed up can be judged by a comparison of labor costs in the automobile industry in 1939 with those prevailing in 1929:

	1929	1929
Auto Doors	\$4.00	\$.15
Body Frames . . .	3.00	.35
Finishing	3.00	.20

In other industries workers have been thrown into the discard at alarming rates. Thus technological improvements in the production of machine tools have eliminated 11 men from their jobs for every one remaining; in lumbering also, machines have deprived 11 men of their jobs out of every 12 formerly engaged in this industry. In other lines the proportion is even more astounding: thus machines now do the work of 20 men in the production of window glass, of 25 men in the cutting of garments, of 42 men in the refining of oil, of 54 men in the electric bulb factories and of 100 men in the production of cigarettes. And, despite all the statements of capitalism's apologists, there are no new industries in prospect which can absorb more than the tiniest fraction of these disemployed.

There is no gainsaying the fact that, relative to America's capacity to produce, the workers live in a virtual state

SHADOW-BOXING CAPITALIST POLITICIANS

"Though not all would agree with this view, I believe that the great virtue of the American party system is that it unifies the country. After a period of sharp contention, the approach of a national election causes the factions in each party to sink their differences and to unite. It then causes the two parties, when united, to blur the issues which divided them. Thus, as the country approaches the conventions and even more as it approaches the elections, the political issues become more and more a question of tweedledum and tweedledee." — Walter Lippman in his syndicated column, *Today and Tomorrow*, January 25, 1940.

of pauperdom while all the essentials for a luxurious standard of life remain untouched around them. Why? As the poet has it,

"The answer to the riddle, friends,
Propounded o'er and o'er
Is simply that a thousand men
Still labor for a score."

In other words, the reason for the present plight of the vast majority of the people is they are compelled to work or starve as the interests of the owners of the means of production dictate. And as long as the greatest portion of the wealth produced by the workers is appropriated by these individuals who own the industries, it is impossible for the masses to buy back the products they have produced. The result is that unmarketable surpluses accumulate. When these goods pile up to a certain point the industries must shut down and thousands must be thrown out of work. Once unemployed, they are no longer able to consume on the same scale as before, thus causing more workers to lose their jobs. And so the vicious circle goes.

Is there a way out? Yes, there is! But it demands that the dispossessed and the exploited of society make up their minds, collectively, no more to allow the many to toil for the profit of the few. It demands that the workers organize their forces, on both the political and the industrial fronts, for the purpose of taking into their hands the conduct of society. It means the expropriation of the capitalists form their private ownership of the socially used means of production, and the destruction of the political state, the repressive instrument with which the workers have been held in check while their masters exploited them.

That solution is the establishment of Socialism, the collective ownership of the means of production and their democratic operation by the workers, for the benefit of all. Only with the ushering in of this new order will the natural wealth, the advanced technical plant and the skill of the workers be properly used so that the bounties of our highly mechanized civilization will no longer be potential but real.

—HERBERT BRANDON

ON THE DALLAS UNION FRONT

(Special Correspondence)

In an attractive little booklet issued by the Industrial Department of the Dallas, Texas, Chamber of Commerce, the business leaders boastfully state:

"Anticipating the coming of the Industrial Era, Dallas has attempted to create favorable conditions for industry. Dallas was one of the first cities to organize an open-shop association. Open-shop conditions prevail throughout the city's industrial structure. As a result DALLAS IS FREE FROM LABOR TROUBLES."

That the Dallas Chamber of Commerce is exerting every ounce of its energy to keep Dallas an open-shop citadel cannot be denied. Its inspired

open-shop association with its undercover "service men" and many other trappings peculiar to such "patriotic" gentry is always ready to do its bit against organized labor. A notable effort in that direction was made only recently when the city administration goaded by the labor-hating Chamber, forced the city firemen to liquidate their year-old union, which the firemen had built at great sacrifice for the protection of their interests. Using as a weapon an archaic city ordinance, the firemen were compelled to resign from their union under threat of discharge and loss of their social benefits. Its boast that Dallas is "free from labor trouble" is a veritable untruth, to put it mildly.

Dallas offers many attractions to industrial chiselers who are always on the lookout to get something for nothing. Abundance of cheap labor under open-shop conditions, cheap power and fuel low rents, etc., more than offset the high freight rates prevalent in the South. Its geographical location, too, serves as an excellent distributing center for the South. These features are constantly dangled before the manufacturers of the East and the North by the ever-alert Dallas boosters of the Chamber of Commerce. Many of the manufacturers of the get-rich-quick variety have succumbed to the temptation. Millinery manufacturers from Chicago and Philadelphia, dress and cloak houses from the East and Pacific Coast, suit and pants manufacturers from here, there and everywhere, invaded the city in rapid order. Heavier industries, too, were gradually drifting in. As a result in the course of a few years, Dallas accumulated a potentially organizable membership of 200,000 wage earners.

Up to the advent of the NRA in the Roosevelt era, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce was the undisputed master of the industrial structure it so carefully nurtured. It made good its promise: greater profits to the manufacturers and lower, very much lower, standards for the workers. The wages of the industrial workers in Dallas remains between 15 and 16 per cent less than in adjoining markets, such as St. Louis and Kansas City. The hours of work were anywhere from 9 to 12 a day, the 9-hour state law for women notwithstanding. The cost of living, on the other hand was, in proportion, far higher than in other cities of that size and location. A virtual chiselers' paradise, indeed! No wonder the Chamber of Commerce was able to boast that industrial profits in Dallas were greater than in all other industrial markets of the U. S. for the year 1935.

Up to the year 1936 the labor movement of Dallas reflected the attitude of the Chamber of Commerce, that is

to say, it was bound and gagged and, of course impotent. The early period of the NRA caused, not even a ripple on the calm waters of industrial Dallas. The building trades were practically the only industries that had a semblance of organization. The Ford "service" men, strong-arm rowdies employed by the Ford Motor Company, acted as vigilante squads against any attempts to extend the influence of organized labor—and very few attempts, indeed, were made. The bosses felt secure in their power. No attention was paid to the Wagner Labor Act. Workers were fired at the least suspicion of union adherence. A vicious blacklist prevailed in all industries. Dallas was growing and its industries were expanding; at the expense of the workers.

Then the unions began to drift in. First came the International Ladies Garment Workers, followed by the Cap and Millinery Workers International and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Things began to hum and buzz. The powerful Garment Workers International, with its power, prestige and experience, initiated a lightning organization campaign in the dress industry and shortly after called a strike. The workers responded with vigor and enthusiasm. That strike became a classic in Southern labor struggles. For the first time in its history

M-Day in France . . . An idea of how the American M-Plan will operate is given by the status of workers under military control in France. Here's how it looks in action:

"Paris, March 23 (U.P.)—Thirty war industry workers who refused to work have been sentenced from one day to 3 years in prison by a military tribunal, it was announced today. Half the workers were men excused from military service because they were needed in industry and therefore were considered merely transferred from the army."

Dallas saw mass picketing, not by "radicals" and "bolsheviks," but by local men and women, friends and church members, who only yesterday, as it were, came from the cotton fields of Texas. The Dallas dress makers gave a genuine exhibition of a militant strike struggle. The newspapers were full of stories with pictures showing strikers prostrating themselves before the entrance of factories to hinder strike-breakers entering the shops. The drowsy citizens of Dallas were shocked and amazed. The Chamber of Commerce became jittery and frightened. That strike proved to all doubting Thomases that Southern workers can be organized and infused with the militancy to strike and fight for the establishment of a real union.

Here was a situation challenging the might and power of the Chamber of Commerce and its offspring, the Open-Shop Association. They immediately jumped into the breach. "Service" men began to molest, intimidate and beat up peaceful union members. Violence was introduced on the picket lines. Arrests and prosecutions followed. Court litigations became the order of the day. Farm girls from nearby communities were herded into the shops as strike breakers. The morale of the strikers was undermined by propaganda from the pulpit and the reactionary press.

Shortly after, another test of union strength, this time between the Millinery Workers Union and the Association of Millinery Manufacturers, broke out. For nearly a month the union was locked in a struggle with the Chamber of Commerce and the Open-Shop Association. That struggle climaxed in the merciless attack on George Baer, the organizer of the millinery workers union, who was kidnapped in a downtown street in broad daylight, taken to a deserted spot along the highway and left in unconscious condition. George Baer has suffered the permanent loss of the sight of one eye as a result of that fiendish attack. The men who did this piece of vigi-

lante work were identified as the aforementioned "service" men of the Ford Motor Company. Numerous attempts at prosecution failed to bring these marauders to justice. They are still at large. That strike, too, was lost.

So, it seems obvious, the boast of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce that Dallas is free from labor trouble is a brazen lie. Sporadic strikes occur, almost regularly. The millinery workers union conducted a strike only a few months ago. Unfortunately it lost again. Others have struck and won. A notable case is that of the Truck Drivers. That union has nine contracts with transportation companies of Dallas, covering 500 men. Their conditions have vastly improved. The bakery drivers are busy organizing and so are the clerks and the butchers. The taxi drivers maintain an organization in spite of bitter hostility from the large cab concerns. The Dallas Central Labor Council numbers an affiliation of approximately 20,000 men and women.

The Dallas labor movement is beginning to march forward. Its leaders realize the importance of organizing Dallas. They know it will be a hard job, but they are preparing carefully. They are determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

The Dallas Chamber of Commerce had better revise its beautifully-bound booklet. Dallas is free from labor trouble! Says who?

B. S.

Champion of Democracy . . . According to an Associated Press cable dated January 31st, the Allies have just secured an important recruit in their battle to defend "democracy." He is Prince Ernst Ruediger von Starhemberg, one-time leader of the Austrian Heimwehr, the native fascist rival to Hitler's Nazis. The former butcher of the Austrian workers has been commissioned an infantry lieutenant in the French Army.

DE LEON AND REFORMISM

Question: "In a recent issue of *LABOR POWER*, you published an article praising Daniel De Leon as an uncompromising revolutionist, unalterably opposed to reforms. I also notice that your organization lays claim to following De Leon.

At the same time, you support the struggle for relief. As far as I have been able to discover, Daniel De Leon never supported such efforts. How can you favor such reforms and still consistently call yourselves De Leonists?"

—J. R., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer: The manner in which the above question is posed indicates the correspondent's unfamiliarity with both subjects upon which his letter touches, namely, reformism and De Leonism. Particularly at this time, when the entire Socialist and Labor movement is in retreat before the onslaughts of its class enemy and the assaults of its internal cancer, Stalinism, is it necessary to present clearly the lessons which De Leon's long experience in the fight for emancipation had taught him. With one "leader" after another capitulating to the pressure of the class struggle and seeking the supposed haven of class collaboration, the views of one of the most intransigent fighters in behalf of the working class gain an added value today. On the question of reformism, De Leon was without a peer among Marxists, having the advantage of living in the most advanced capitalist world, where its social consequences could be seen most clearly.

Reformism is that political philosophy which teaches, directly or indirectly, that it is possible to improve the condition of the masses under the existing capitalist system. This philosophy is utterly false, particularly at this period in the decay of the dying system, because the economic laws by which capitalism operates decree that the condition of the workers shall grow increasingly worse. The facts of life

around us show that the premises of reformism have no foundation. Despite all the "progressive," "liberal," "beneficial" legislation of the past 30 years and more, the plight of the working class as a whole was never worse. The only real solution for the workers, therefore, is to break with the bankrupt policy of reformism and organize their forces politically and industrially to overthrow the system which offers no hope to them.

Where does the question of relief fit into this picture? According to our correspondent's question, he assumes it to be a reform and therefore unworthy of support by a revolutionary party. This is politically incorrect. The struggle of the unemployed for relief, or the resistance of the WPA worker to a cut in his wages are in no way to be regarded as attempts to *improve* the conditions of the workers under capitalism; on the contrary, these struggles are waged to *maintain* the lives of the unemployed even at the starvation level, against the attempts of the political agency of capitalism, the state, to condemn them to death by slow starvation. No revolutionary party can ignore the struggles of the unemployed, nor can they remain aloof bystanders while the workers battle against the sentence of death by withdrawal or curtailment of relief.

Since the death of Daniel De Leon, a totally false conception of his ideas and his teachings has been disseminated by his epigones in the Socialist Labor Party. Seeking a theoretical cover for its own sterile and sectarian phrasemongering, the SLP has not hesitated to distort and obliterate those of De Leon's writings which call upon the revolutionary party to carry on the class struggle militantly so that it earns the "love, respect and confidence" of the working class. This is most particularly true of the SLP's policy on the industrial field, which its members have all but deserted by party decree,

in direct contradiction to De Leon's dictum that "by thus giving over all participation in the industrial movement, they wholly disconnect themselves from the class struggle that is going on every day."

Similarly with De Leon's teachings on reformism. The outstanding feature of De Leon's 24 years in the Socialist movement was his unwavering opposition to opportunism and reformism in the labor movement; yet this did not prevent him from supporting measures of relief which would serve to ameliorate the condition of the poverty-stricken workers, provided that such measures were put forward in their true colors as palliatives and temporary expedients. His fight against reformism was a struggle against the illusion that workers' conditions on the whole could be improved under capitalism; his support of palliatives was based on the understanding that without such relief, the condition of the workers would become even more hopeless. Yet not a single glimpse of De Leon's real views on this question is afforded by the literature of the latter-day self-styled "De Leonists."

A condensed picture of De Leon's position on relief and ameliorative proposals in general may be gained from the reply to a correspondent, a Socialist Party member in Schenectady, N. Y., who protested against De Leon's condemnation of the city administration which was then in the hands of the S. P. In the *Weekly People* of December 7, 1912, De Leon replied:

"The S. L. P. does not object to any measure that affords relief. On the contrary, the S. L. P. recognizes the utility of such measures. What the S. L. P. objects to is the propaganda that looks to relief in ways and means which deny the class interests of the proletariat, the only class interests upon which the Socialist Republic may be constructed. Such propaganda, and the palliatives that flow from it, not only do not aid the rearing of the Industrial Republic, they hinder the same.

"To illustrate with a concrete instance taken from the Schenectady S. P. administration itself, and as well exposed by the S. P. Mayor's own executive secretary, Walter Lippman:

"Taxes weigh heavily on the middle class, a class that it is part of the mission of capitalism to proletarianize, that is, pound into revolutionary material. All agitation against high taxes is not, however, an agitation founded upon a class interest of the proletariat. The reason is simple. The proletariat does not pay the taxes. The practical results of a false theory that underlines an anti-taxation propaganda are seri-

Capitalism gains in Italy . . . Who benefits by the Fascist regime under Mussolini is revealed by a study of joint stock enterprise in Italy just completed by Dr. Carl T. Schmidt of the Columbia University department of economics. According to Dr. Schmidt, less than one per cent. of the total number of stock companies in Italy, excluding banks, own approximately 50 per cent. of all the wealth controlled by non-banking corporations. Concentration of wealth is even more pronounced in the field of banking, where in 1936 the three leading commercial banks held 56.1 per cent. of all banking capital. "On levels other than corporate ownership—that is, on personal and bureaucratic levels—business controls appear to have been concentrated even further within the last fifteen years."

The Fascist environment, Dr. Schmidt believes, has spurred the growth of large-scale business organizations. Large corporations of all kinds have played an increasingly prominent role in Italian economic life since the rise of Mussolini.

The poverty, degradation and misery of the Italian workers was not studied by the Columbia economist, but the increased wealth of the capitalist class since Mussolini took power is an excellent indication of the increased exploitation of the Italian masses.

ous. A party of Socialism that comes into municipal power after a propaganda that promises reduced taxation lands in office smitten with paralysis.

"Hardly any of the palliatives it should introduce upon the scale that conditions demand and that the Social Revolution urges, is possible of accomplishment. It is not possible because funds are necessary thereto; and, funds cannot be raised, because that would require higher taxes—a thing which the false palliative propaganda had condemned. The consequence is that, instead of mass palliatives partaking of the dignity of forerunners of the Social Revolution, instead of them, palliatives are fatedly resorted to that partake of the nature, the degrading nature, the revolutionary-pulse-deadening nature of *alms*, such as our correspondent recites—cheap coal, cheap ice and even free school books, which many workingmen's children are too poor to profit by. All of which our correspondent, correctly and probably inadvertently says that 'many a poor working man' has reason to be thankful for. Yes, many an individual, but too few of these to be the mass.

"It should be superfluous to answer the question, What would the S. L. P. do if it controlled a city? Impossible for the S. L. P. to control a city without a clip and clear working class-interests-propaganda having won the victory. With such a propaganda rendered triumphant at the hustings, the S. L. P. will not dole out alms to individuals—it will raise the condition of the mass."

And, to show that this was no accidental statement, we may cite a letter-

box answer to another correspondent, in the *Daily People* of April 15, 1911, in which De Leon outlines the conditions under which advocacy of such palliatives is permissible, and when it is harmful:

"Palliatives are useful only when tendered as such with the express understanding that something else is needed for cure, and the statement of that something else. Where these two things do not accompany palliatives, they are apt to be taken for cures, and, insofar (as this happens) the palliative does untold harm. This applies with equal force to social questions."

We have quoted De Leon's words in this connection to indicate that his views were altogether different from those imputed to him by his so-called followers. As a matter of fact the problem of relief and unemployment is now far beyond any point reached during De Leon's lifetime and the importance of the plight of the unemployed workers in relation to the entire working class has also increased correspondingly. So that even if we did not have De Leon's specific strictures on the question to guide us, we still would be forced to deal with the problem in precisely the same way, namely, to support all the struggles of the unemployed for relief, while at the same time pointing out the impossibility that capitalism can continue for long to maintain huge relief budgets without cracking, and urging the unemployed to organize side by side with the employed workers to carry on the struggle for emancipation from the system which starves the one and exploits the other.

THE PRICE OF DISUNITY

It has been repeatedly pointed out in the columns of *LABOR POWER* that the continued division in the ranks of labor together with the internecine

warfare that it breeds can only serve the interests of the employers. Not only do the bosses egg on the workers to fight each other in the hope that all

unionism will be destroyed or discredited; but in many cases they play off one union against the other in order to beat down the wages and working standards of the rank and file to the minimum. The union leaders who are ever ready to denounce each other and are never at a loss to find reasons why unity is impossible, tumble over each other to make concessions to the employers when they fear the "rival" may be recognized and dealt with.

Recent developments in the New York building construction field serve to bear out the truth of these contentions completely. In our March issue we dealt at some length with the strike-breaking invasion of the CIO into this industry, pointing out how the United Construction Workers' Organizing Committee, under the direction of A. D. Lewis, was offering employers in Washington and New York reduced wage scales and increased hours, in order to induce them to sign contracts with the CIO rather than the old craft unions of the AFL.

It was not to be expected that the Building Trades chieftains would take this challenge without resistance. Nor were they slow to pick up the gauntlet. On March 19th some 200 delegates from the New York Building Trades Department of the AFL met in conference and were addressed by John P. Coyne, International President. The result of the conference was a decision to establish a uniform wage scale of \$9.00 for an eight-hour day for all construction workers in the small-residence building field in place of the varying existing scales which range between \$11 and \$14 for a working day of six or seven hours.

The very next day, Thomas A. Murray, President of the New York Building Trades Council announced that a meeting had been held with representatives of builders of small houses and that steps had been taken toward the signing of a contract incorporating the new \$9 scale. In a press release accompanying the announcement, Mr.

Murray stated that "The meeting had as its outstanding purpose the stimulation of a wider purchase by the average man of one and two-family houses, with which the government, builders, organized labor, and, indeed, every section of the population is in accord. It is highly desirable from the standpoint of the well-being of the nation. We feel that the way to achieve this exceedingly worthwhile purpose is through the establishment of a uniform wage scale for various craftsmen employed in the construction industry.

This announcement was recognized by all parties concerned as the merest eyewash. Mr. Murray's conversion to the principle of the stimulation of building by means of wage cuts was a very sudden one. As one newspaper reporter commented, "Should this proposition materialize it would constitute an unprecedented step in the building industries, where AFL unions heretofore have turned a deaf ear on all suggestions for downward revision of wage scales to facilitate building." The AFL's change of heart was motivated solely by the desire to repel the CIO invasion.

In the meantime, at the very moment when Mr. Murray was meeting with the small home builders, A. D. Lewis was in conference with the Building Trades Employers Association and offering them a contract which included some choice provisions calculated to make the employers' mouths water, such as: a \$9 scale for 8 hours work; freedom from strikes and jurisdictional disputes; arbitration of all disputes; wider latitude for continued mechanization in the industry; and no interference with the use of non-union materials. The simplest way to characterize this offer by the CIO spokesmen is to state that no company union could have done better by the employers.

Now that the AFL leaders have decided to match the CIO Construction Workers' scab threats with a counter-scabbery offensive of their own, they

will have to go the whole hog and meet Mr. Lewis' latest concessions. The whole sordid bargaining conflict is being waged between these two contending sets of labor fakers primarily because both sets want to win the privilege of collecting the dues of the building construction workers. Neither set is more than incidentally interested in the rate of the workers whom they are betraying.

Let not the rank and file members of the AFL Building Trades unions be deceived by the honeyed words of their leaders, who will soon attempt to persuade the membership to swallow the new scale. The argument will be advanced that it will not adversely affect their standards but will in fact give union men more employment in the small-home building field where union organization is not yet universal. But this contention backfires at those who put it out.

If it is true, as Mr. Murray announced, that a "uniform" wage scale (meaning wage cuts) together with a longer working day will stimulate business in the small-home construction industry, then why should it not be tried in the other construction fields which have so long been in an extremely depressed state? One need be neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet to predict that before very long the employers in every branch of construction work will be repeating Mr. Murray's words and calling for a readjustment of wages downward and for longer hours.

To the CIO rank and file in the building field we especially commend to their attention that portion of Lewis' sellout offer to the employers which gives assurance of no interference with wider utilization of mechanical improvements in the industry. Do you realize, fellow workers, what this innocent-sounding provision really means? It gives the green light to the permanent elimination of thousands of union members from the industry. It is no exaggeration to say that the

adoption of labor-saving mechanical devices which have already been perfected and are waiting for a market will eliminate as many workers proportionately as the introduction of similar devices has done in the mass production industries. Up to now the answer of the unions to such a threat was to reduce the hours of work in order to reduce unemployment to the minimum; but the new offer by Mr. Lewis of increased hours makes it difficult if not impossible to raise the question of shorter hours for a long time to come.

And what of Mr. Lewis' promise to legitimize the use of scab material on jobs where CIO workers are employed? Its chief effect will be to threaten the jobs of union workers engaged in producing building materials while impetus is given to owners of non-union factories to extend their operations to a larger field without hindrance from the CIO Construction Workers.

These are a few of the fruits of the civil war now raging in labor's ranks. It is not the "big boys"—the Lewises, the Greens or the Murrys, etc.,—who are the victims of labor disunity. Their handsome salaries go right on, regardless of what happens. It is the rank and file members, caught in the cross-fire of the contending labor fakers, who are the real sufferers and who pay the penalty for this disunity in the shape of worsened conditions and lower standards all down the line.

As far as the building trades are concerned, the struggle for supremacy is only just beginning. According to the report of the *New York Times*, "unprejudiced observers said that both labor camps were preparing for what may develop into one of the most stubbornly contested struggles in the labor history of New York." And we may be sure that the brunt of that struggle will not be borne by the leaders.

To the building workers and indeed to all organized workers we repeat our previous warnings: the greatest task facing the American labor movement today is the cessation of the bitter fac-

tional warfare that is decimating its ranks and the unification of the entire trades union movement to present a closely-knit line of defense against the onrushing assault of their employers and their political tools.

The present division in labor's forces is seriously undermining workers' solidarity among the organized, discouraging and repelling the unorganized, and supplying a welcome handle to the forces of fascist reaction who are determined to hogtie labor with government regulation and control. Continued disunity can only result in defeat after defeat for the forces of labor and must inevitably lead to the undoing of the working class.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 4)

Mr. Watt is on the right track in pointing to the profit motive as the root of the evil, but he does not go far enough. It is not sufficient to strike at the profit motive within the single field of Workmen's compensation. It is necessary to go further and to strike at private property and profit in industry itself, if the injured worker is to receive justice and economic security. This is not a matter of abstract theory. But it is the lesson driven home by the experience of the State of Ohio, which has exactly the type of non-competitive State Fund advocated by him. According to Mr. Watt's theory, conditions should be ideal in Ohio. The fact is, however, that the evils and shortcomings of Workmen's compensation are just as glaring in the state of Ohio, (we refer the reader to the plaint of Mr. Donally, cited above) as they are in Mr. Watt's own State of Massachusetts, where the private carriers have a monopoly.

As we pointed out in rebuttal by ex-Commissioner Sayer, former Administrator of Workmen's Compensation in New York State, no insurance fund, whether State or privately owned, can

override the basic laws of business which must govern its operation under capitalism. Said Mr. Sayer, "Mr. Watt would have us forget a few basic facts and principles underlying the payment of Workmen's compensation, and as a former Administrator of Workmen's Compensation laws, including the competitive State Fund of the largest industrial state in the Union . . . I felt that I have the right to say that no competitive and no exclusive State Fund or any private insurance company can pay out more than it takes in by way of premiums . . . I think if you will examine the experience of the State of New York, you will find that when under the direction of the State Department of insurance the premium rates for compensation rose to such a point as was necessary to cover the silicosis obligation, no company would write the business at that rate . . . Under the law the State Fund had to write them and the State Fund doubled and tripled in some instances the rate that had been fixed by the private insurance companies, and that because the State recognized that you cannot pay out more than you take in. In order to make sure that they collected from industry a premium adequate to pay the anticipated losses from silicosis they doubled the rates so that in many of the industries the State Fund was charging 25 per cent of the payroll."

What Mr. Sayer is here saying in effect is that under the prevailing capitalist system you cannot use Workmen's compensation to solve the social problem created by injury and disability in industry. At best Workmen's compensation can act only as a palliative. To which we must add that those proponents of social legislation who believe that an ideal system of Workmen's compensation is possible under capitalism are indulging in a pipe dream. As Mr. Sayer points out, an insurance fund cannot pay out more than it takes in by way of premiums. If a really honest attempt were made to mete out awards to injured workers

commensurate with the losses they suffer, the premium rates would rise so high as to endanger the possibility of profits. But the advocates of "ideal" Workmen's compensation are by no means prepared to take such a step.

Workmen's compensation does not stand alone as a panacea which has failed utterly to live up to its high promises. We may say that without exception, every piece of so-called labor legislation contains a concealed pitfall for labor. In the last issue of *LABOR POWER* we had occasion to analyze the social consequences of the widely-praised Federal Wages and Hours Law. It was shown that whatever beneficial and palliative effects the act had in raising the conditions of substandard sweated labor was merely incidental, and that in the long run this type of law tends to undermine the standards of the working class as a whole.

The Wages and Hours Law provides a floor for wages and a ceiling for hours. But the very nature of capitalist production compels the employers to counteract any higher costs imposed by these restrictions. As a consequence of the new law the employers can look only to labor-displacing machinery and the introduction of speed-up techniques to reduce costs. These alternatives, however, spell increased unemployment not only in the particular industry affected directly by the law but in all industries, for displaced workers can no longer purchase industry's products. Thus the Wages and Hours Law, like Workmen's compensation, far from acting as a means of improving workers' conditions, serves only to plunge labor deeper and deeper into the mire of economic insecurity.

In stressing the impotence of social or labor legislation to better the conditions of the working class, we by no means wish to imply that there is no need for immediate alleviation of unbearable conditions. In truth there is a crying need for such alleviation; even this palliative value is impossible of

full realization. The lack of enforcement of labor legislation is notorious.

In the editorial opinion of the March, 1940 issue of the *American Labor Legislation Review*, official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Labor Legislation, "usually only a small portion of violations are detected. Total violations may be likened to an iceberg, only a small portion of which appears on the surface." This general lack of enforcement is by no means accidental.

During the 1937 National Conference for Labor Legislation delegate after delegate arose to deliver glowing reports of the progress of labor laws in their respective states. It almost seemed as if, at long last, labor was coming into its own. There was just one tiny fly in the ointment, however, as Miss Rose Schneiderman of the New York Industrial Commission brought out.

"I wonder, Madame Secretary," Miss Schneiderman asked, "whether it would be possible for the Commissioners of the different states to say whether the appropriations are adequate to administer so much new legislation? I would like to ask the brother from Illinois?"

The brother from Illinois, Mr. Soderstrom, was compelled to confess shamefacedly, "There are never sufficient appropriations." His colleague, Mr. Wade, reported for Michigan that "One thing that is wrong with our Labor Department and has been as long as I have had contact with it, is that it never has received sufficient funds to operate properly . . . and it has been a step-child of our state administration." It was reported to the Conference that the entire factory inspection staff of the Michigan Department of Labor is limited to twelve inspectors. According to the Census of Manufactures, there are 5,614 manufacturing establishments in the state of Michigan. Many of these plants employ hundreds, thousands, and even tens of thousands of workers. Yet there are

only twelve inspectors to check on labor law violations in 5,614 plants!

Mr. Chapman of Ohio, while rejoicing in a new law enacted by the Ohio Legislature, complained that it was difficult to enforce because "In the state of Ohio, and I suppose you probably find the same condition in other states, they forget it takes money to administer these laws and do not make any additional appropriations in the departmental budget for the administration of these laws." Mr. Chapman does these worthy legislators an injustice. They do not forget. They remember only too well!

The Federal Wages and Hours Law is a classic example of how the politicians sabotage their own labor legislation. On January 7th, the Wages and Hours Administration reported to Congress that complaints of violations of the Act were pouring in at the rate of 1,000 per week and that it was confronted with a task far beyond its resources in trying to investigate the 15,547 alleged violations already filed. The report also indicated that the average inspector was able to complete only one inspection every two weeks. There are at present 290 inspectors throughout the entire country, a number entirely inadequate to check up on 250,000 employing establishments which are subject to the law.

The administration appealed for an adequate appropriation to enable it to enforce the law properly. The House of Representatives, which had no qualms about lightly voting over two billion dollars for "defense" preparations turned thumbs down on this request. Over a year ago Elmer A. Andrews, former Administrator of the Act, had testified before a House Appropriations Subcommittee that "if the Act is going to mean anything at all you have got to have people in the field to see to it that there is a decent observance of it. If there is not, I would recommend that the Act be taken off the statute books entirely." But the trouble with Mr. Andrews

was that he had forgotten the politicians' old maxim that there is more than one way of skinning a cat.

These slick politicians have perfected the technique of passing labor legislation and winning praise for themselves as "friends of labor," while at the same time removing any possible sting from such laws by failing to provide sufficient funds for enforcement.

The fallacy of depending upon the capitalist government and its machinery to protect labor's interests is well illustrated by the present New Deal union-busting campaign, being carried out in the guise of prosecuting anti-Trust Law violations under the Sherman and Clayton Acts. The crowning irony of this situation is that the Clayton Act, which was passed to clarify and amend the original Sherman Anti-Trust Law, specifically states that labor is not to be considered a commodity, a provision intended specifically to exempt labor organizations from the operation of the anti-Trust Laws. When President Wilson signed the Clayton Act it was hailed by the American Federation of Labor and by Samuel Gompers as a tremendous victory and the Magna Charta of labor. Yet today this alleged Magna Charta is being used in an attempt to hogtie the American labor movement!

From all experiences with labor laws and their enforcement the workers are learning the bitter truth that the capitalist government can not serve two masters, and that any attempt by the workers to utilize the governmental machinery in their own interests must inevitably come to grief.

There is only one way for labor to protect and safeguard its interests and that is to look to its own class power, organized in the industries by the unions. Whatever measures of allevia-

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tion under capitalism are possible can be enforced by the workers' own economic strength. Once labor organizes its economic power and proceeds to wield it in its own interests, the employers will be only too glad to yield labor "laws" and even observe them without quibbling.

However, it must be borne in mind that the struggle for alleviation has its definite limitations. No amount of labor or social legislation, regardless of how widespread its application and how thoroughly and effectively it may be administered, can solve the social question now confronting society. Legislation does not and can not strike at the root evil of this problem. All that it can and seeks to accomplish is the *modification* of existing institutions without destroying the existing property and social relationships. However the root of the evil is to be found precisely in these existing property and social relationships, which in their entirety constitute the capitalist system of production.

Only by abolishing the private ownership of the social means of production and the class divisions that it creates can the problem of growing poverty, increasing economic insecurity and the ever present threat of total war be solved.

Capitalism and its host of social evils can not be wiped out by a piecemeal, gradual, legislative process. The entire

edifice, the foundation and superstructure, must be completely demolished. To accomplish this task, the working class must organize into a revolutionary political party for the purpose of capturing and destroying the capitalist state power. This is the indispensable, preliminary condition for the emancipation of the proletariat. However, political organization must be supplemented with class conscious industrial organization for the two-fold purpose of providing the necessary might to enforce the conquest of power and at the same time to serve as the embryo of the new society within the confines of the old.

The revolutionary political and industrial organization of the proletariat is the need of the hour.

—A. ZIEGLER.

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